

LEARNING MADE EASY



Jack Russell Terriers

for
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A Wiley Brand



Choose the right
Jack Russell Terrier for you

Housebreak, train, and
socialize your new puppy

Handle common
behavioral problems

Deborah Britt-Hay

Jack Russell Terrier breeder and trainer



Jack Russell Terriers

by Deborah Britt-Hay

for
dummies[®]
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Jack Russell Terriers For Dummies®

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Introduction

bet you can't turn on the TV without seeing a commercial or a sitcom showcasing the antics of a little dog with crimped ears, an alert expression, and a tail standing at attention.

This saucy little dog has taken the United States by storm and is known as the Jack Russell Terrier or, to those who already own one, a Jack Russell Terrorist. Thanks to the popularity of PBS's *Wishbone* and *Frasier's* Eddie, these British imports have become as hot as the Beatles, Earl Grey tea, and taxation.



WARNING

As a longtime owner and trainer of these remarkable dogs, however, I ask you to take a moment to consider your decision to own a JRT. Yes, they're cute, charming, and very smart. Yes, they're a big dog in a little dog's body and are fun, fearless, and funny to be around. Yes, they're the adorable little white bundles you see plastered on billboards, television, and movie screens. But they also are pushy, are extremely active, and have a voracious appetite for attention. That is why I've written this book — to make sure you're making a well-educated, conscious choice to purchase one of these little white terrorists and to give you the knowledge to keep your sanity after the decision has been made.

About This Book

JRTs, as they are commonly called, aren't for everyone. It takes time, patience, and an unmistakable sense of humor to tolerate their endless antics and tireless energy. For thousands of dog owners across the country, however, no other breed is worth considering.

If you're contemplating buying a JRT, you must first decide whether the breed truly is the right one for you and your lifestyle. These appealing little terriers have complex and distinctive personalities that are significantly different from the Poodles, Dobermans, or Labs with which you may have been raised. This book helps you explore the intricacies — and oddities — of the JRT personality to determine whether you have what it takes to be owned by a Jack Russell Terrier.

After you make your decision, I help you along the fun, but often rocky, path of Jack Russell ownership. You find out about house-training, health issues, typical behavioral hurdles, and how to have lots of fun with your new little soul mate. Along the way, I share some funny stories to show you that you're really not alone in this endeavor and that your terrier isn't that eccentric when compared to other JRTs.

Foolish Assumptions

This book assumes you know nothing about Jack Russell Terriers. If you have some experience with these feisty little dogs, you may want to scan the Table of Contents or Index to determine which chapters relate to your individual situation and interests. If you're considering buying a Jack Russell Terrier, or if you have a new puppy or dog already, this book takes you step-by-step through the fundamentals of raising and training your JRT.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into easy-to-handle parts, each designed to be a mini-book on different aspects of Jack Russell terriers. You can read each part in a short amount of time, without reading other parts. This way, you can pick and choose what you really want to focus on each time you read.

Part 1: Personality Plus! The Basics on Jack Terriers

If you're looking for answers to why your dog does what it does, this part is for you. This part offers explanations for some JRT behavior and what you can expect if you decide to purchase a JRT as a pet.

Part 2: It's All in the Details: Tips for Making the Perfect Match

This part helps you decide which Jack Russell may be the one for you. It offers suggestions on how to find a breeder and how to select a puppy out of a given litter. It also has tips to help you steer clear of potential disastrous situations.

Part 3: Setting Out the Welcome Mat

After you decide on a pup, this part helps you prepare to bring your new family member home. In this part, you discover tips on house-training, puppy-proofing your house, and introducing your new terrier to your existing family members.

Part 4: Creating a Healthy Lifestyle

If you need some information on how to keep your JRT healthy on a daily basis, this part is for you. It covers feeding, exercising, and grooming and gives you tips for keeping your terrier safe, finding a suitable veterinarian, and discovering some fun games to play with your terrier.

Part 5: The Part of Tens

This traditional part of every . . . *For Dummies* book gives you lots of information in a small amount of space. Look here for information on traveling with your terrier, registering your JRT with a club, or visiting great Web sites to get more information than you'll ever need on JRTs!

Icons Used in This Book

Part of what makes this book fun and different from other doggy titles are the icons scattered throughout the book. These small graphics in the margins focus your attention on interesting facts, important information, and safety cautions that can help your training and handling go more smoothly.



TIP

This icon highlights special tips for training and caring for your Jack Russell and provide shortcuts that can save you time and frustration.



REMEMBER

This icon points out helpful hints that every JRT owner needs to know. Use these to get to know your terrier and to remind you how to approach training your dog.



WARNING

These icons highlight important health precautions that can save your pampered pooch a lot of discomfort — and save you a lot of sleep. Look here if you think something may be harmful to your dog. This icon also helps you avoid common pitfalls in training, as well as dangerous handling habits that can hurt you or your terrier.



TRY THIS

This icon shows you how to organize your puppy search and perform daily activities with your Jack Russell. If you're looking for things to do with your terrier or need ideas to get you started on a certain training project, look for this icon to get you started.

Where to Go from Here

Not sure where to go next? Here are some tips:

- » If you really want a clear road map, start at Chapter 1 and work your way all the way through this book.
- » If you're just beginning your Russell search, Part 2 is the place for you.
- » If you're having special problems with your terrier, try Part 3.

Remember that you can skip around to the topics that interest you without feeling like you've walked in on the middle of a movie. Each chapter is self-contained.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet. To get this Cheat Sheet, go to www.dummies.com and search for "Jack Russell Terriers For Dummies Cheat Sheet" by using the Search box.

1

Personality Plus! The Basics on Jack Terriers

IN THIS PART . . .

Are you considering whether you have what it takes to be owned by a Jack Russell Terrier? If you have it in your mind that the spotted little bundle of joy you pick will grow up to be the next TV star amid the ranks of Wishbone and Eddie, you may be sadly disappointed. Keep in mind that hours upon hours of training have gone into these dogs to make them into trainable little angels. While most JRTs don't approach this level of training, you can find a JRT that will become a cherished pet and important family member, provided you do your homework.

This part explores the JRT personality, discusses typical breed types, and gives you a basic lesson in JRT ownership to help you determine whether a Jack Russell Terrier is the right dog for you or you should begin your search elsewhere.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Coping with JRT's high energy levels
- » Taking a look at inherited personality quirks
- » Recognizing some odd but common behaviors
- » Sympathizing with the "little dog" complex
- » Acknowledging their amazing feats

Chapter **1**

What's a JRT's Temperament Really Like?

If you've ever spent any time in the company of a Jack Russell Terrier, you know that this little dog is a bit different than any other breed you've encountered. People are drawn to them because they're typically very funny to watch and amusing to be around. Other pets are often puzzled by them because of their boundless energy and their ability to be in a hundred places at the same time.

This chapter identifies the quirky behavior of the JRT and gives you some tips for how to deal with those behaviors.

Talking about Turbo JRTs

One of the most amusing and common behaviors of JRTs is their proclivity for rapid and continuous movement. This can take the form of running at full speed around the house or the yard; through doorways; up and over furniture, human

beings, and other pets; and back the other way like on a makeshift raceway. After a minute or two, they usually stop, grin at you, and then take off again in the other direction. I affectionately call this the *Jack Russell Turbo*.

This behavior shows that the JRT is a high-energy — and high-maintenance — dog. The Jack Russell's energy and exuberance for life can manifest itself in many ways, and turboing is just one of them. Rest assured, yours is not the only household that has been turned into the Indy 500: Jack Russell owners across the nation are befuddled and amused by this sudden burst of terrier energy. If you can get beyond the irritation of being used as part of a pinball machine, you may find this habit rather endearing. If nothing else, it's certain to bring a smile to your face.



TIP

As an added benefit, unwanted houseguests may be quick to change their minds when they get stuck in the middle of the Jack Russell Turbo, leaving you and your family to the relative peace of your home. Granted, you have to take care that *wanted* houseguests are protected from this particular terrier habit.

JRTs TAKE ON HOLLYWOOD

With their spunky personalities, endless energy, and remarkable intelligence, it's no wonder Jack Russell Terriers have become a favorite among producers. From television ads to blockbuster hits, JRTs are making their mark on viewers across the nation. Hollywood and Madison Avenue can't seem to get enough of the Jack Russell Terrier.

More and more JRTs are popping up in the most interesting places — Nissan commercials, ads for the Travel Channel, sitcoms such as *Frasier*, and even a show on PBS called *Wishbone*, in which the big star is — what else? — a Jack Russell Terrier. You may have seen JRTs starring with such film greats as Jim Carrey in *The Mask* and Gene Hackman in *Crimson Tide*, and may have noticed Sparky alongside John Travolta in the angel flick, *Michael*. These little white dynamos are holding their own in the acting department, and I bet they aren't even impressed by the six-figure salaries!

Performing comes naturally to Jack Russell Terriers whether on TV, in the movies, or in your own home. They love to show off their strange and quirky personalities, and they have more than their share of fun while entertaining you and themselves.

In real life, though, Jack Russells are not as they're portrayed in the movies or on television. Don't buy a JRT because you think he's cute or because your children want their own Eddie or Wishbone. In real life, JRTs are nothing like the well-mannered, well-trained stars you see for a few minutes strutting their stuff on television.



REMEMBER

Even regular exercise doesn't remove this amusing behavior from your terrier's repertoire, although it may temper it a bit, causing your dog to be a little less rambunctious. If the thought of a little white bullet rocketing through your house at a high rate of speed bothers you, you'll be sorely disappointed in your choice of breeds. Like digging, barking, and hunting, turboing is very much a part of the breed, seen in virtually all JRTs and in all different bloodlines.



WARNING

Don't leave your puppy alone for extended periods of time unless you want to return home to a demolition derby. Being alone is stressful to your dog.

Observing Forms of Aggression

Although you may normally think of aggression as attacking other pets, dogs, or people (and some terriers can go overboard in this area), the JRT also can exhibit aggression in other, more amusing ways. I know of one dog who attacks the electric garage door every time it's activated. Although this is hilarious to observe the first few times, it can be scary when the little demon forgets to let go and almost gets carried up into the mechanisms of the door. To make matters worse, the dog attacks not only the owner's garage door but any electric door in the vicinity. How do you explain to a neighbor that your dog is defending you from the garage door?

Another story I've heard is about a male JRT who lives on a farm. His favorite pastime is attacking the family's tractor whenever there is work to be done, much to the frustration of the tractor's operator. He growls and attacks the bucket at the front of the tractor, biting the edge and refusing to let go. When that doesn't work, he works his way around to the wheels of the tractor and hangs onto the lug nuts, going 'round and 'round like a slow motion Ferris wheel as the giant tires turn. He does this for hours, obviously convinced in his own mind that he is saving his owners from a ferocious metal beast.

Other aggressive behaviors can take the form of attacking a vacuum, mop, or broom, which can make housecleaning a bit more of a chore than it already is. Some dogs go as far as to actually pounce on the machine and hang on as you try to vacuum, or they grab the bristles of the broom and shake their heads vigorously in an attempt to kill it. Socks and clothes also can fall prey to the ferocious Jack Russell, especially when you're trying to get dressed in the morning and already are 15 minutes late for work. How on earth they know that you're late and need this distraction like you need a hole in the head is anyone's guess, but somehow they manage to choose these times to play! If you can manage it, look at your dog's behavior as a way to lighten up and enjoy the day in spite of your tardiness.



WARNING

Children often assume that, because Jack Russells are relatively small, they should be friendly and easy to hold. And because these types of JRT behavior often are quite funny, your children may be drawn to the dog and want to interact with her. But children should not approach or try to pick up a JRT who displays aggressive behaviors. The terrier becomes somewhat fixated with the object of her attention and, if startled, could snap out reflexively at the child. The dog doesn't intend to hurt the child, but she doesn't make a distinction between the child and the object she's attacking, and she shouldn't be punished if she reacts this way. To the dog, the big bad object would simply be biting back!

Hunting High and Low

Like aggression, the hunting instinct is strongly bred into the Jack Russell, and no amount of training will rid this little dog of her desire to seek out the nearest quarry. Although some terriers are honest-to-goodness rodent hunters and will rid your home, barn, or yard of anything that remotely resembles a rat (like a rock), others use their hunting instincts in a more amusing way.

One of my pet Jack Russells hunts insects on a regular basis. Flies, spiders, mosquitoes — it doesn't matter. He jumps on tables, on couches, in bathtubs — anywhere to gain an advantage over his insect prey. After he catches the bug, he ferociously kills it (which really doesn't take much), proudly leaves it there for all to see, and goes on to his next victim. He stares at the ceiling, the lamps, and the corners of the room to be sure no killer bug has invaded his sanctum. Heaven help the insect that strays into the home of a bug hunter!

Not only will your JRT hunt odd things, she can spend hours doing so. Sometimes she will hunt absolutely nothing at all. One of my best breeding bitches will stare at a hole, corner, or even someone's foot for hours on end, getting up only to feebly scratch at the hole, corner, or foot in question and then sit down and stare again. I call this *gremlin hunting* because only she can see what she's after. At least I know our home is totally free of gremlins!

Examining Random, Nutty Behavior

If turboing and hunting bugs, gremlins, and garage doors aren't bad enough, other even stranger behaviors are considered common within the Jack Russell Terrier breed. Some of these behaviors stem from boredom; others come from an

overabundance of energy. All, however, seem to portray the intensity and often obsessiveness of the JRT.

» **Catching rays:** One of my friend's JRTs goes crazy when her children bring out a flashlight. His favorite game is to play "chase the beam of light." The family turns off all the lights in the room, and the dog goes crazy trying to catch the light spot. Another dog, the product of our own breeding program, goes crazy when his "light saber" (of *Star Wars* fame) is brought out. He runs through the house, jumping several feet off the ground to try to catch the light saber. Another variation of this is a dog who sits by the window every morning waiting for the sun to come up. When the sun rises, it casts shadows on the wall, and the dog spends the next hour or so jumping on the wall to catch the shadows. Sometimes these dogs get so worked up that they have to be put in a crate just to calm down.

» **Rock dogs:** Rocks also are fascinating to many JRTs. Some carry a rock around for hours and will play "go fetch" with a rock just as they would a ball. Others enjoy chewing or licking rocks — even stalking them. (After all, some rocks can be hard to catch!) Although this habit can be amusing, don't let your JRT get too involved in rock chewing. It can prematurely wear down her teeth, or even worse, it can crack a tooth, resulting in a pretty hefty vet bill to repair the damage.



WARNING

If you find that your terrier is indeed a rock hound, keep an eye on her dental hygiene to make sure she's not severely wearing down the tooth surfaces and that no burrs or debris get caught in the gum, causing possible infection. If you know your dog has had a recent bout of rock wrestling, hold her on your lap and thoroughly check the inside of her mouth — including the inside and outside of the gum surfaces — for abrasions or foreign matter that may have become imbedded. If you find such debris, remove it with a syringe filled with water or with tweezers, much as you would a splinter. Keep an eye on the area for a few days to make sure it doesn't become infected.



TRY THIS

Some dogs choose very large rocks and make digging them out of the ground and rolling them around an all-day project (see Figure 1-1), but your little white terror may get too involved in her digging and end up with a leg or foot injury. Although permitting your terrier to indulge in these activities allows her to burn off pent-up energy, try to limit such physically demanding activities. If you find that your terrier is getting too involved, change her focus by giving her another toy to play with or another activity to divert her attention.

FIGURE 1-1:
Digging in the
backyard may
seem tame
compared to
what JRTs can do!



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A terrier's taste for rocks doesn't always take the form of digging or carrying them. Some Jack Russells prefer to combine their love of rocks with their love of water, making their antics even more amusing. Remember that a JRT is always thinking — some would even say scheming — to find ways to make life more fun and more interesting. What better way to amuse themselves than with their two favorite toys? One of the funniest stories I've heard about JRTs, rocks, and water is about Scooter, a JRT who loves water and jumps in the family pool whenever he's given the chance. One afternoon, after playing with a family member in the yard, Scooter carried the rock he had been playing with into the pool area. There, he accidentally dropped the rock into the pool. As his owners looked on, Scooter leaned all the way over the pool's edge, putting his head under water to try to get his rock back. When this failed, he ran back and forth along the pool's edge barking, trying to bark the rock back up to the surface. After several minutes of futile barking, Scooter tried another plan. He took several steps back away from the pool's edge and jumped head-first into the pool. Ducking his head under water, he literally dove to the bottom of the pool and retrieved his favorite rock. After he taught himself how to do this, "rock diving" became a favorite pastime. Now he often amuses himself for hours by tossing in a rock and going to retrieve it.

Pools aren't the only water sports that JRTs enjoy. One of my dogs, Annie, is a sprinkler fanatic, and this special pleasure is passed down from generation to generation of her puppies. I try to warn new JRT owners about this particular

penchant for water, though some fail to realize the extent of the fascination until they experience it for themselves. Many Jack Russells attack yard sprinklers or any human being with a hose in their hand, and try to bite the stream of water that comes out. Some jump several feet off the ground to grab the water, snapping their jaws in a futile attempt to capture the elusive sprays. The best part is the dreamy look on their faces as they smile at you, soaked from head to toe and panting heavily. How could life get any better?

- » **Problem solving:** Jack Russells are almost uncanny in their ability to problem-solve, not only with rocks and water but with life in general. Many owners underestimate the jumping ability of their Jack Russell Terriers and are amazed when they find that JRTs jump onto kitchen counters to retrieve a steak left out to thaw or a cookie out of the cookie bin. They also are clever about finding their way into backpacks, duffel bags, and drawers, especially if their keen noses pick up something that smells delectable. I have known JRTs to unzip zippers with their teeth, to open drawers with their front paws, and to undo seemingly impossible clasps to get to the desired treat. If you own a JRT, take a word of advice — never underestimate the tenacity of a Jack Russell!
- » **Tasting the furniture:** Another odd behavior common to JRTs is the desire to lick a certain piece of furniture whenever the dog becomes excited. The object might be the corner of a bookcase or the side of a bathtub. Why they do it is anyone's guess, but like all their obsessions, they focus on the object with fierce determination and can literally lick the finish off of the furniture.

I know from personal experience that hot sauce, cayenne pepper, and the like aren't deterrents when a terrier sets her mind, or in this case her tongue, to a task. The only way to stop the behavior is to catch the dog every time you see her licking the furniture and tell her "No!" Usually the dog is stimulated by your presence, such as when you first come home, so she only exhibits this behavior in front of you. The fact that you're there to watch makes it easy to modify the behavior. (Other behaviors, such as digging or hunting rocks, usually are done for the dog's own amusement while you're away; however, they are no less frustrating.)

If you don't have a sense of humor about such things, don't purchase a Jack Russell Terrier. Like the changing weather and the tides, some things just can't be stopped, and a terrier's odd behavior is one of them. You may be able to get your dog to decrease the frequency of some of her less-desirable idiosyncrasies, but some will always remain.

- » **Break-dancing:** That Jack Russell Terriers love to sleep on their backs with all four feet in the air is pretty common knowledge, but did you know they also incorporate this position into another quirky behavior I affectionately call *break-dancing*? It's true. One day, an unsuspecting JRT owner will walk in and see his little white terrorist on her back dancing across the floor. Some seem to do it as a form of scratching the itch on their backs. Others do it when